In order to boost the export of sugar, the Government has taken the following measures:

(i) Sugar meant for export has been exempted from the levy obligation.

(ii) The quantity of sugar released for export is treated as advance free-sale release to be adjusted in the free-sale stocks of the sugar factories after a period of 18 months.

(iii) Duty Entitlement Pass Book (DEPB) at the rate of 4% of the FOB value of export of sugar has been allowed.

(iv) Hitherto only mill white sugar was being exported. It has been clarified that in addition to mill white sugar the sugar mills/ exporters can also export raw sugar under the present Export Import (EXIM) policy.

(v) The Government has amended the Sugar Development Fund Act, 1982 so as to provide for defraying the expenditure from the Sugar Development Fund on internal transport & freight charges to the sugar factories on the export shipment of sugar. This amendment has come into force with effect from 21.6.2002 and necessary rules have also been notified.

Discussion on bilateral issue in SAARC

*153. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that regional organizations like SAARC, instead of focusing attention on regional issues as per their original charter, are raking up bilateral issues, and this its existence for 20 years has not contributed significantly towards meaningful regional co-operation;

(b) if so, whether Government would ensure that the ensuing SAARC meet in Pakistan in January, 2003 does not discuss any bilateral issues and a real beginning is made towards regional co-operation as per its original charter?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI DIGVIJAY SINGH): (a) SAARC was established in December 1985, and is now 17 years old. Article X (2) of the SAARC Charter expressly excludes bilateral and contentious issues from its

deliberations, and attempts to bring in such issues have never been allowed to succeed. While SAARC may not have fully fulfilled the high expectations for regional cooperation, it has many achievements to its credit.

(b) As in the past, similarly in future also India will not allow the SAARC Charter to be violated by anyone bringing up bilateral issues, India will also exert maximum efforts to push the SAARC process for regional co-operation further.

Training of drivers

*154. SHRI R. KAMARAJ: Will the Minister of ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the increasing trend of road accidents in our country;

(b) if so, whether Government are considering to train drivers to international standard to decrease the number of accidents; and

(c) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF ROAD TRANSPORT AND HIGHWAYS MAJOR GENERAL (RETD.) (B.C. KHANDURI): (a) The total number of road accidents has been increasing over the years, keeping in view the increasing number of motor vehicles coming on the roads. However, as a result of various safety measures taken by the Government, the number of accidents per ten thousands vehicles has been steadily declining over the last few years. The details are given below:

Years	Total No. of registered motor vehicle (in thousands)	Total No. of road accidents (in number)	Number of road accidents per 1000 vehicles
1	2	3	4
1996	33786	371204	109.87
1997	37332	373671	100.09
1998	41368	385018	93.07
1999	44875	386456	86.12
2000	48393(P)*	391449	80.89(P)*

P* Provisional